

# Col. Alvarado wins leadership, alumni awards

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October 15 and 16 were red-letter days for Col. Laura Alvarado, 311th Human Systems Wing vice commander. Award-winning days.

“It was a wonderful weekend,” she said.

First, during a luncheon at a San Antonio hotel, the colonel was presented the 2004 Women’s Leadership Award for Public Service by the San Antonio Business Journal. The next night, at the Distinguished Alumni Gala, she received the 2004 Distinguished Alumni Award from the University of Texas at Arlington School of Nursing.

“I was extremely moved,” she said, commenting on the Women’s Leadership Award. “Dr. (Brendan) Godfrey, who nominated me, showed his confidence in my ability when he submitted me for the award.”

Colonel Alvarado had no idea that Dr. Godfrey planned to nominate her. He did it just prior to leaving his position as 311th HSW deputy director, so the honor was a complete surprise. This award recognizes individuals who are giving back to their community and making San Antonio a better place to live by the kind of work they do. It is a celebration of her dedicated career as a nurse and a female officer in the Air Force.

“It’s a double honor,” she said, “not only to win the award, but to know that

Dr. Godfrey thought so highly of me. I’ve finally arrived. I’d like to also thank the people from Wells Fargo, who sponsored the category. They’ve been committed to women in small business since 1995 and are great supporters of this awards program.”

The award isn’t just a plaque to hang on her wall, according to Colonel Alvarado. “This award is an important opportunity to share how the 311th HSW mission contributes to the local community,” she said. “Our focus is on the human in the weapon system and that literally impacts every aspect of the Air Force.”

Colonel Alvarado was one of 12 alumni to receive distinguished alumni awards this year, one from each school or department within the university, including architecture, athletics, business, education, engineering, the Honors College, liberal arts, military science, science, social work, and urban and public affairs. She was nominated by the School of Nursing. Unlike the Leadership award, this one wasn’t a surprise.

“Dr. Elizabeth Poster called me from the school and told me they wanted to nominate me to compete for the award,” she said. “I was honored, and of course, said yes. When she called months later to tell me that I’d won, I was overwhelmed.”

Before becoming vice commander of the wing, the colonel served as the commander and dean of the U.S. Air Force School of Aerospace Medicine at Brooks. She was the first female and the first non-physician in the school’s history to serve



Col. Laura Alvarado, vice commander of the 311th Human Systems Wing, receives the 2004 Women’s Leadership Award for Public Service. The award was presented by Annie Taylor, who represented the San Antonio Business Journal.

as commander. According to her, there’s one man most responsible for her recent success.

“I wouldn’t be doing what I’m doing today if (Brig.) Gen. (Tom) Travis (311th HSW commander) hadn’t given me the chance to be vice commander of the

school, then commander,” she said. “He saw strengths in me that others didn’t recognize.”

Her present job at the wing is the “opportunity of a lifetime,” she said. “It’s a path no other Air Force nurse has ever taken.”